

# **Massachusetts Department of Correction ~ Countering Violent Extremism Final Report**

**7/30/19**

## **Required Sections**

### **1. Project Narrative**

The New Freedoms program was implemented in October 2017. Its design was intended to capture inmates expecting to release from a maximum security facility who had engaged in aggressive or violent behavior throughout their incarceration. The program is comprised of an in-prison portion that lasts approximately 6 months and a post-release portion that is 7 months long. Program clinicians utilized an evidence based curriculum focused on developing pro-social attitudes and behaviors; learning relapse prevention skills to prepare participants for high-risk situations in the community; establishing a positive support system; improving problem-solving skills; and encouraging good choices after incarceration. Additionally, clinicians made efforts to establish connections with resources in the community and create relationships with other parties involved in clients' care such as probation officers, therapists and family support systems. Participants would receive referrals for employment assistance resources such as MassHire Career Centers, Volunteers of America, and UTEC (a local organization whose mission is to ignite and nurture the ambition of the most disconnected young people to trade violence and poverty for social and economic success).

Clients were also encouraged to engage in wrap-around services to further complete their care. Referrals were made for substance use treatment/counseling/MAT and mental health treatment through programs such as Spectrum outpatient services, CleanSlate Centers, Advocates, and South Bay Community Health Services. The program also utilized contingency management and client incentives in the form of gift cards and transportation vouchers to maintain consistent participation within the community.

### **2. Outputs**

- 86 participants enrolled between 10/1/2017 and 5/22/2019.
- 75 released between 11/30/2017 and 6/30/2019.
  - 12 released participants, or 16%, did not complete the pre-release portion of treatment:
    - 3 transferred to lower security while enrolled;
    - 2 were terminated due to non-compliance;
    - 5 withdrew;
    - And 2 released to ICE custody.
  - 63 completed the pre-release portion.
    - 50 participants, or 79%, enrolled post release.

- Of the 50 discharges after post-release enrollment:
    - 12 completed the entirety of the program;
    - 13 were discharged in good standing due to program conclusion;
    - 3 were terminated due to non-compliance;
    - 9 withdrew;
    - 12 returned to custody or have pending criminal charges;
    - 1 moved out of the service area.
  - 13 did not enroll after release, despite completing the pre-release portion:
    - 1 released to ICE custody after completing the pre-release portion;
    - 6 released out of the service area;
    - 6 withdrew by not responding to the provider post-release.
- Collectively, 86 participants were discharged from either the pre-release or post-release portion of treatment between 10/1/17 and 7/31/19;
  - 23% of discharges resulted from formal withdrawal from the program or the participant did not respond to the provider post-release;
  - 15% of participants enrolled in the post-release portion of programming and were discharged in good standing due to program conclusion;
  - 15% of discharges resulted from participants no longer meeting the eligibility criteria;
  - 14% completed both the pre- and post-release portions of treatment;
  - 14% of discharges were a result of recidivism;
  - 12% were discharged in good standing prior to release due to program conclusion;
  - 7% were terminated due to non-compliance.
- 96% of community participants received assistance accessing resources from clinicians. Resources include Department of Transitional Assistance services, accessing health insurance plans, obtaining identification documents, medical and/or behavioral health services, housing, employment and education resources.
- Clinicians worked with local probation offices to assist in the reintegration of participants that were under probation supervision upon release.
- Clinicians worked with participants to build support networks with members of the community (most often family members or positive peers) and integrating the support network into the participant's treatment. Participant's support person would attend sessions with participant periodically to offer support and accountability for participant.
- Clinicians made recommendations for further treatment and would make referrals when necessary. In an effort to promote self-efficacy in participants, clinicians would offer support while guiding participants through the process of accessing resources or services.

- Program staff built rapport with a (1) central person at each location to facilitate referrals for program participants. Connections were made with the following resources:
  - Resources for housing, food, clothing, etc.
    - New Life Furniture Bank
    - Community Action, Inc.
    - Catholic Charities – Diocese of Worcester
    - Salvation Army
    - The Finery Tattoo Removal
  - Employment Assistance/Volunteer Opportunities
    - MassHire
    - Volunteers of America
    - UTEC
    - Community Servings
  - Educational Resources
    - NETTS Training School
    - Community Action, Inc. (CAI) Adult Learning Center
  - Mental Health and MAT Treatment
    - South Bay Community Services
    - CleanSlate Outpatient Addiction Medicine
    - Advocates
    - Lynn Community Health Center
    - Lahey Behavioral Health
    - Middlesex Recovery
    - Bridgewell
    - Lowell Community Health Center
    - Arbor Counseling Services
    - Community Health Link

### **3. Outcomes**

- 79% of all participants that completed the in-prison portion of the program engaged in post-release treatment;
- Average of 96% of community participants were engaged in additional treatment programming, to include behavioral health treatment and accessing community resources;
- 24% of post-release participants discharged were due to legal involvement; 25% of legal involvement was relating to parole and probation requirements;
- Community participants were observed interacting positively with Probation Officers during required meetings;

- Staff engaged in client centered treatment approaches. Utilizing outcome rating scales, it was found that on average participants scored 8.6/10 in their overall feelings of self;
- 21 participants provided Spectrum with a statement regarding their participation in the program. Participants described an appreciation of the staff's knowledge and support in assisting them in accessing the proper services and resources in the community.

#### **4. Lessons Learned**

- A number of the project objectives, including reducing number of arrests, convictions and violent offenses of program participants, cannot be accurately observed due to the program duration being 13 months (6 months in-prison and 7 months post-release). The length of program participation within the allotted timeframe for the program does not allow for an accurate data pool.
- Program staff attempted to utilize peer mentoring and peer accountability practices to maintain engagement in aspects of treatment programing. The population did not respond well to this approach. Additionally, this approach proved to be unproductive once the participant had released from prison. Staff then adjusted the focus to family engagement strategies and utilizing positive peers that were identified by the participant.

#### **5. Promising Practices**

- CBT and MI training for staff proved beneficial; utilizing a Session Rating Scale, participants on averaged scored 9.3/10 on their impressions of the session with their counselor.
- Use of A New Freedom curriculum. Clients benefited from the curriculum pertaining to developing pro-social attitudes and behaviors, learning relapse prevention skills to prepare them for high-risk situations in the community, establishing a positive support system and improving their problem-solving skills to make good choices after incarceration. A surveyed participant stated, "This program helped me see other options for decision making."
- Utilizing the Buss & Perry Aggression Questionnaire (1992) on a sample of program participants (N=31), it was observed participants were found to have a decrease in overall aggression by 4.8, on average (see attached).
- Use of contingency management and transportation assistance to increase frequency of program involvement. More than 90% of post-release participants engaged with post-release treatment at any time post incarceration. Participants reported being "thankful for the transportation assistance".

## **6. Sustainability**

The program will not be continued in any capacity. There are many competing priorities within the DOC since the new Criminal Justice reform was enacted. The Department has been very focused on putting the mandates from the law in place, as there are many moving parts to this important legislation. However, this program's curriculum was developed utilizing program materials that are currently being employed by Spectrum and will remain in use after the conclusion of the current project.

## **7. Deliverables**

Deliverables were not created throughout the life of the project

Optional/if applicable sections:

## **8. Contact Information**

No contact info available.

## **9. Appendix**

- A. Buss & Perry Aggression Questionnaire Raw Data (Stripped)
- B. CVE Data 7-31-19 (Stripped)